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SUBJECT: Damascus Media Reaction: UNSC Resolution 1636,
Iraq, Palestinian Territories, South Lebanon (11/8)

11. Summary: Syrian papers today featured a press statement by Judge Ghada Murad, head of the Syrian committee established to investigate the Al-Hariri assassination, announcing commencement of review of the transcripts of testimony of Syrian witnesses and confirming cooperation with the international investigation commission and the Lebanese judiciary.

Papers also reported the visit to Jordan by Deputy Foreign Minister Walid Moallem conveying a message from President Asad to King Abdullah on developments in the region in the wake of UNSCR 1636.

Headlines reported the visit to Beirut by Elizabeth Dibble, U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs, citing her statement that the "US supports an historical shift in Lebanon."

Government-owned Al-Ba'th headlined an International Herald Tribune story describing the Mehlis report as "political" and saying that "the pretexts on which it is based are more false than those concerning Iraqi Weapons of Mass Destruction."

End of summary.

12. Selected Headlines:

"The Syrian Judicial Probe Committee embarks upon its mission by studying the Mehlis report and inspecting the transcripts of Syrian witnesses' testimony, and confirms cooperation with the International Investigation Commission and Lebanese judiciary" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 11/8)

"President Asad sends a message to King Abdullah of Jordan on the situation in the region and UNSC Resolution 1636. King Abdullah: Exposing Syria to pressure destabilizes security and stability in the region. Deputy Foreign Minister Walid Moallem: We are ready for professional cooperation" (Government-owned Al-Thawar, 11/8)

"[U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs] Elizabeth Dibble pledges support for 'an historical shift' in Lebanon. Lebanese youth stage a sit-in protesting US policy" (Government-owned Al-Ba'th, 11/8)

"Herald Tribune: The Mehlis report is political and based on pretexts. The US goal is to subjugate Syria" (Government-owned Al-Ba'th, 11/8)

"Warnings against politicizing the investigation continue. Praise for the transparent Syrian judicial cooperation" (Government-owned Tishreen, 11/8)

"The EU approves deployment of observers at the Rafah border crossing. Occupation forces attack Jenin. Sharon reviews his settlement plans at the Knesset" (Government-owned Tishreen" (Government-owned Tishreen, 11/8)

"The US army speaks of the killing of 36 gunmen and the arrest of two hundred in "Operation Steel Curtain". Six marines killed, others injured in Baghdad and Al-Husaybah" (Government-owned Tishreen, 11/8)

"The Iraqi government postpones a national reconciliation conference. Iraqi figures reject Arab League sponsorship of the conference" (Government-owned Al-Ba'th, 11/8)

"Israeli warplanes violate South Lebanon airspace" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 11/8)

13. Editorial Block Quotes:

"An Ethical Crisis"

Muhammad Khair al-Jammali, an editorialist in government-owned Al-Thawra, wrote: "The US Administration is trying to escape the series of crises and scandals surrounding it by fabricating political differences with other countries like Syria, Iran, and Sudan, even if this leads to new crises....

"The reason behind the change in the American people's position toward the administration's policies is the huge accumulation of facts about the war on Iraq and their insistent indications of the failure of this war, which will approach the Vietnamese impasse unless the Bush Administration rushes to withdraw its troops....

"In their treatment of these crises, hawks in the US Administration must remain mindful that the policy of covering up the failure that produces the US crises and their consequences, through the attempt to export them to other countries -- as shown by their unjustified pressure on Syria, which falsely suggests that Syria is responsible for the predicament caused by the erroneous and false American approach -- remains a useless policy because the American people, and with them the peoples of the world, will discover the hypocrisy of this policy as quickly as they discovered the hypocrisy of the war on Iraq and its false slogans."

"Palestine, Iraq, Syria and Lebanon... What Follows?" Buthaina Sha'ban, Minister of Expatriate Affairs, wrote in government-owned Tishreen: "The old colonialist countries are targeting Lebanon because it embraces the resistance that liberated the land from the most vicious and brutal military and political force.... They are targeting Syria because it supports Arab rights and resistance against the occupation of the Arab land....

"Divisions among Arabs have encouraged the enemies of Arabs to encroach upon Arab dignity and disdain Arabs....

"The campaign against Syria and Lebanon at this stage seeks to sow the seeds of division, suspicion, and doubt among the two peoples, who are linked by the strongest human, historical, social, and economic bonds. Rafiq al-Hariri was assassinated because he was a backer of Syria, Lebanon, and Palestine, and because he was very important for improving the Arab situation and its international ramifications. He was assassinated to complete the scheme of extinguishing the remaining Arab light, represented by the Syrian-Lebanese bonds.

"All Arabs are targeted.... The aim is to finalize the traditional and continuing scheme of abolishing Arab identity and civilization and crowning Israel as the only imperial force in the Middle East."

"Syria, or Syrians!"

Abd-al-Fattah Al-Awad, a commentator in government-owned Tishreen, wrote: "The campaign against Syria over Al-Hariri's assassination targets the whole country, not only a number of individuals.... This explains the hasty threat of sanctions....

"The list of American demands is endless.... These demands focus on Syria's policies on Iraq, Palestine, and Lebanon. This is proof that the target is Syria as a country not some Syrian individuals.

"The advice Syria is receiving with regard to the American and international demands most likely proceeds from bad intentions...."

"Racism on the Web"

Ahmad Hamadah, in Al-Thawrah, wrote: "Israel is inciting against Syria over the internet.... Israeli extremists, from the extreme right to the extreme left, are collecting money through the web to attack Syria and are using the internet to distort Syria's image and encourage the United States to impose sanctions on Damascus.... This racist campaign uses fabricated films and false documents to show that Syria supports terror.... The hostile internet sites also offer children electronic games depicting Syrians as monsters willing to kill humans.... They encourage abolishing Syria and killing Syrians....

"We ask those who fight anti-Semitism: What do they think of this incitement against Syria?"

Seche